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THE
Commonweal
A Weekly Review of Public Affairs, Literature, and the Arts
THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

week by week

PEACE ON EARTH

DURING EACH Christmastide we are reminded once again of the hope that entered history with the glad tidings of Bethlehem. From the Gospel of Luke we hear again of the "heavenly host praising God and saying 'Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to men of good will.' "

As we hear this promise of peace we must, almost inevitably, think of the means, insufficient at their best, by which nations now attempt to maintain a perilous peace, to avoid a terrible holocaust. Nations of fifteen countries meet in Paris to bolster the NATO alliance, while a leader of the Communist bloc, Premier Nikolai Bulganin, says that the theory of limited warfare "is not only utterly inconsistent from the military point of view but is extremely dangerous." The alternatives that Mr. Bulganin would like to force upon others are clearly "peace" or desolation—there is to be nothing in between.

Yet, as James Reston of the N.Y. *Times* pointed out, "the whole history of this century testifies to man's appalling inability to prevent the outbreak of armed conflict. . . . Since 1896, the peoples of the world have scarcely known a single year without some kind of conflict . . . and though this is supposed to be the age of reason, there has been nothing since the twelfth century to compare with the monstrous record of wars, rebellions, massacres and pogroms in the twenties." In this perspective, our century does present an appalling testimony. But other centuries, too, have sought unsuccessfully for peace.

In the seventeenth century Thomas Traherne expressed it thus in his "Christian Ethics":

Were all the World a Paradice of Ease
'Twere easie then to live in Peace.
Were all men Wise, Divine, and Innocent,
Just, Holy, Peaceful, and Content,
Kind, Loving, True and alwaies Good
As in the Golden Age they stood;
'Twere easie then to live
In all Delight and Glory, full of Love,
Blest as the Angels are above.

But the world is no more a "Paradice of Ease" than it was in Traherne's time, nor do all men possess these virtues. We live in a troubled century which is even further complicated and endangered by man's ability to wage a nuclear war, when, indeed, the ability to wage it seems more definite than the ability to prevent it. The alternatives posed by Mr. Bulganin are insistent: "peace" or desolation. The potential horrors of a full-scale nuclear war are so overwhelming that the ideal of non-violence, which Dom Bede Griffiths so urgently sets forth in this issue, becomes all the more compelling.

BUT DOM BEDE also says that Communism represents the spirit of absolute violence. And there can be little doubt in the minds of our military and political leaders that it is this spirit which is embodied in the "peace" so temptingly held out by Mr. Bulganin. Were the United States to weaken its defenses, were it to renounce all use of nuclear weapons, there would be little defense against the incalculable ravages of Communism. The truth is, as Dom Bede states, that the entire concept of a "just war" is imperiled. It is further true that many responsible leaders find the traditional moral arguments irrelevant to this problem. There is no course of action which seems to lead clearly to peace rather than conflict.

Confronted with this apparent impasse, Christians may well be faced with the questions which T. S. Eliot put into the Christmas sermon of Saint

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Thomas à Becket: "Does it seem strange to you that the angels should have announced Peace, when ceaselessly the world has been stricken with War and the fear of War. Does it seem to you that the angelic voices were mistaken, and that the promise was a disappointment and a cheat?"

After asking this question, Thomas recalls the sufferings and tortures of the Disciples, those to whom Christ said, "My peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." The peace promised at the birth of Christ derives not from this world: "Not as the world gives, give I unto you." The world was not to be transformed into a "Paradice of Ease" nor were all men to become suddenly virtuous.

While men yearn for peace among nations, the cessation of warfare, such peace must not be confused with the Christmas promise. There may be a paradox between the angelic promise and our century of warfare; there can be no conflict.

We will gain the peace we can in this world not by easy alternatives—"peace" or desolation—but by striving to find among the limited possibilities of political life the temporary solutions of shifting problems. We will attain to that peace whose promise is constantly renewed at Christmas by living Christ-imitating lives.

LABOR'S CONVENTION

WE LIKED what was done about corruption at the recent A.F.L.-C.I.O. convention better than what was said about it. Despite last-minute rumors of a behind-the-scenes deal, the giant Teamsters Union was expelled on schedule, and similar disciplinary action was taken against the bakery and laundry unions. There seems to be no doubt that President George Meany is still determined that labor will clean house, and that he can so far muster the necessary votes. But criticism of the Senate committee to investigate labor-management abuses was stronger than ever, and much more public. Many top officials clearly share the conviction of George M. Harrison of the Railway Clerks Union that the committee is bearing down harder on labor than on management, and that its ulterior purpose is to prepare the way for anti-union legislation.

There is no doubt that some members of the McClellan committee are genuinely anti-union. But we do not see that such views were included in the labor legislation soon to be proposed to Congress by the Administration. As outlined to the Convention by Secretary of Labor James P. Mitchell, these proposals call for: annual reports on pension and welfare funds; reports on the democracy of union procedures; provisions for secret balloting for union officers. No suggestion of any punitive measure along the lines of a "right-to-work" law on a national level was included—in fact, Mr. Mitchell expressly rejected such an idea. Yet President Meany subsequently told the assembled delegates that he was "very skeptical" about much of the Administration's program. The A.F.L.-C.I.O. would support legislation to safeguard union funds from abuse, he said, but he expressed fear that proposals like the one on union elections would put the government "pretty deep" into labor affairs.

There is, obviously, some point to Mr. Meany's fear of excessive government interference. It may strike a responsive chord among some businessmen. But we doubt that plain and simple opposition to the Administration's proposals on union democracy is the best policy for labor to pursue. The fact that secret and honest balloting may be the rule in most unions does not alter the fact that some provision must be made to see that the rule applies to all. If the top leaders of labor fear too much government intervention, on this or any other aspect of the situation, the answer does not lie in denying that any problem exists; it would be far better to show that the need can be met without government intervention.

In the case of union elections, for example, it might be possible to place them under the supervision of a respected outside organization. The problem is complicated, and on this and similar questions suggestions should be sought from those union officials who have been fighting for internal reforms for many years. But whatever form the A.F.L.-C.I.O. counter-proposals may take, the important thing is that labor show itself determined to face the knotty questions of union democracy and internal reform in an honest and realistic way.

SCIENCE FOR LIFE

IT IS DIFFICULT, these days, to work up much enthusiasm for the technological wonders of a tomorrow that may never come. But in fairness to the technologists, who after all only gave the rest of us the weapons, it might be noted that scientists nowadays are working—and successfully—on a good deal else besides destruction.

In the not much publicized, non-space area of human sickness and disease, for example, it may

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well be that one of these days science will provide a "cure" for most types of blindness. A recent A.P. dispatch describes an extraordinary series of tests, conducted by a New Jersey neurologist, whereby a blind woman was able to "see" flashes of light through the use of a photoelectric device which bypassed her useless eyes and fed its impulses directly to her brain. Electronic sight of this kind is feasible, says the doctor, in any case where there has not been damage to the brain cells controlling vision, and such brain damage is comparatively rare.

Against the background of our cosmic miseries, this is a small thing, perhaps, and not enough to build a philosophy on; but it is worth keeping in mind as we read endlessly of satellites and missiles and bombs, bombs, bombs.

THE BULGANIN LETTERS

WHY IS IT that there is such a widely shared conviction that this time the Soviet notes to the allies require an answer? Premier Bulganin's letters to each of the fifteen participants at the NATO meeting had most of the earmarks of previous attempts to create dissensions and division at the last moment. They suggested neutralization and other proposals all too familiar to Western diplomats in recent years. And if the Soviet Union had any desire to come to mutually acceptable agreements, this has been possible all along through normal diplomatic channels and at the U.N. Yet, despite their propaganda effects, the feeling persists that the latest Soviet notes cannot be dismissed simply as efforts to interfere with the NATO conferees and to mislead the other nations.

For one thing, the Soviet Union is shifting to a generally more conciliatory tone from a position of demonstrated strength. Its threats and promises are now backed up by a superior proficiency in rockets, missiles, jet engines, etc., etc., to add to massive ground forces. The Soviet Union is hardly invulnerable to attack, but the aggregate of its armory of weapons is so imposing that the other nations now feel compelled to listen.

Another element in the situation is that the NATO meeting may well mark a turning point in the organization of the defenses of the West. There are two key arms questions of concern to everyone: how many of the allied nations are to be supplied with tactical nuclear weapons, and which allies are to provide launching sites for the coming missiles? These questions lend a new urgency to the current Russian proposals; they intensify the Soviet desire to negotiate. The prospect of more than three powers with nuclear weapons is a sobering one. It does complicate the problem of effective controls. In its proposals to establish a broad zone which is to be free of nuclear weapons the Soviet Union inevitably appeals to a sense of responsibility among the Western powers.

Ignoring the letters will hardly do at this point. By now their first objective will, or will not, have been accomplished. What still hangs in the balance is their effect upon world opinion. Our own willingness to continue to negotiate need not imply any amount of agreement with Bulganin's stated objectives; nor need it involve acceding to the "summit meeting" Moscow has long sought. An affirmation of our own willingness to negotiate, if expressed in statesmanlike terms, would underline American dedication to the peace and security of the world. If this were followed up by a series of well-argued statements of what the United States and the NATO powers have in view, our stature as defenders of peace and human freedom would be greatly enhanced.

Naturally, this is not wholly a military and diplomatic problem. Our government might also manifest greater practical interest in, and concern for, the well-being of other peoples for their own sake. Such a policy, coupled with an acceptance of Bulganin's invitation to participate in a full-scale cultural interchange, would go far toward reassuring the world as to American intentions. Awareness that at the same time the United States was mightily helping to build up the political and military defenses of the free world would then form part of a comprehensive pattern. All these things could serve as components of an effective answer to Bulganin.

THE LEGION CHANGES ITS MIND

LITTLE ATTENTION has been paid to the recent switch in the American Legion's stand on the study of Communism in the nation's public schools. Until now the Legion has been strongly opposed to teaching our young people anything about Communism, presumably on the grounds that the exposure of youthful minds to so pernicious a doctrine is just too dangerous to be risked.

Such a view misunderstands the nature of education and, worse, implies a strange belief in the irresistibility of Communist ideas and a corresponding lack of faith in the power of the ideals

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of freedom and democracy. It is precisely our faith in the rightness of our ideals, as well as our faith in man, which enables us to put our trust in free—"liberal"—education. Our duty to American students is to help them to achieve knowledge and wisdom. Ignorance of Communism is ignorance still, and wisdom without knowledge is not to be found in the usual order of things. The defection to Communism of the American "turncoats" captured in Korea—so many of whom were historical and political illiterates—is a dramatic indication that ignorance is no protection against the blandishments of Communism.

At any rate, the American Legion has reversed its long-held position and has joined with the National Education Association, its former opponent in this matter, to encourage the study of Communism in the public schools. The two organizations have issued a joint announcement, expressing their belief that learning about Communism would "deepen the understanding of, and loyalty to, American democratic ideals and institutions and expose the fallacies of Communism."

We have had occasion in the past to criticize the Legion for some of its policies and pronouncements, and it would be ungracious and unfair for us to withhold now our commendation for a wise and public-spirited action.

OBSTACLES TO TRADE

THE WELFARE Ministry of Japan places that nation's living standard halfway between those of India and the United States. To sustain even this level for ninety million people with only a few million acres of arable land requires a tremendous effort on the part of our principal ally in the Far East. The difficulties are indicated by the figures for trade between the two countries. One way of putting it is to cite the three hundred million dollar trade deficit the Japanese incur with this country annually; another is to consider that Japanese imports from this country last year had double the value of their exports to us. At the moment, trade in two types of commodities is up for review. In one case there are hearings on imports of Japanese tuna, with our West coast producers asking for greater protection; in the other a Japanese spokesman seeks aid in expediting greatly needed shipments of surplus American farm products to Japan. In this latter case the business that would be affected by a change in the regulations is the American shipping industry. To balance our own domestic concerns successfully with broader national and international objectives is no mean task.

TALKING PILLOWS

PERHAPS DRAWING on Huxley's *Brave New World* without realizing it, a penal official out in California has come up with a new scheme to rehabilitate prisoners. The basic idea is simplicity itself. When a prisoner lies down at night, he gets a message from a tape recording, via an earphone placed next to his pillow. A local minister was called in to help phrase the message, and it is unexceptional enough, even praiseworthy, incorporating as it does sentiments like these: "You can and will solve life's problems. . . . You are filled with love and compassion for all. You do this with the help of God. . . . I am filled with love and compassion for all, so help me God."

This recorded message plays for ten minutes when the prisoner's head first hits the pillow, the idea being to lull a man to the threshold of sleep and "unite the subconscious with the conscious" in order to "implant moral principles necessary for living in society." This initial ten minutes is then followed by an hour's intermission, after which the recording turns on again to play through the night, over and over, at a volume which is reported to be barely audible but which is apparently enough to talk the subconscious into submission.

We don't know how anyone else feels, but this kind of business strikes us as profoundly disturbing and potentially dangerous: Participation in this particular experiment is said to be voluntary, and in this instance it may well be. But "voluntary" cooperation in penal institutions is often hardly that, and we would hate to see this kind of thing go much further without very serious consideration. No one denies that it is good to substitute love for hate, but is this the way to go about it? We have very serious reservations about mental and moral forced feeding, and we'd like to hear what the theologians and psychiatrists have to say about it.

BACK TO THE SUBURBAN SOIL

WE HAVE JUST learned that there is now on the market a lawn sprayer of solid gold, priced at $12,500. And, for more modest tastes, the same gift is available in gold plate for $2,500. There may be luxury tax on these items, too, but we're not really sure.

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The Ideal of Non-Violence

Today the question is not whether it is legitimate for a Christian to refuse to fight, but whether it is legitimate for him to fight at all

by BEDE GRIFFITHS

IT IS OBVIOUS that the coming of the hydrogen bomb must radically affect the Christian attitude towards war. Until now it has been a matter of debate whether it is legitimate for a Christian to refuse to fight, but now the question must be whether it is legitimate for him to fight at all. Even in the last war it was difficult to find a moral justification for the "area-bombing" of Germany, and still more for the use of the atom bomb on Japan. But now the means of destruction have become so indiscriminate and their effects so far out of proportion to any conceivable "just" end, that the whole concept of a "just war" seems to be imperiled.

This, however, is a matter for moral theologians and ultimately for the Church herself to decide. But there is another aspect of the problem which should be of more serious concern to the individual Christian. Moral theologians tend to be concerned with finding how far it is possible to go in any particular direction without actually committing sin. But the Gospel of Christ is not at all concerned merely with the avoidance of sin: that, on the contrary, is what in terms of the Gospel comes under the "law"; it is concerned to show the ideal of life which Christ sets before His disciples. In the Sermon on the Mount we have the Christian ideal set before us in the most absolute terms, and this is the very essence of the Gospel. It is not just a counsel of perfection given to a few chosen disciples; it is the call of the Gospel itself, addressed to all men and summoning them to a new way of life.

At first sight these words strike us as an overwhelming paradox; they seem to go contrary to all normal human values. "Blessed are you poor . . . Blessed are you who are hungry . . . Blessed are you who weep . . . Blessed are you when men hate you and cast you off and revile you, when they reject you as something evil for the Son of Man's sake. . . ." These are words which it is difficult even now for us to accept. Is not the whole philanthropic and humanitarian work of the world aimed at relieving poverty, hunger, misery, oppression, and here it seems these very things are praised? It is the same in regard to property, to marriage, to courts of law; Christ seems to call on His disciples to renounce all civil institutions. "Unless a man will renounce his father and his mother and his wife and his children and everything that he has, he cannot be My disciple."

There is a deliberate force of paradox in these words which warns us not to take them too literally, but at the same time they are meant to present a challenge to all our worldly values. Christ does not deny the value of civil institutions, of property and marriage and law courts; nor does He deny the need to relieve the poor and the hungry and the afflicted. But He wishes to assert that all natural institutions and all human values are of no account in comparison with the kingdom of God. A Christian may accept what this world has to offer; he may marry and possess property and defend himself at law, but he

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must be prepared to sacrifice all these things at any moment. We cannot exaggerate the radical renunciation which the Gospel involves; we can never properly "belong" to this world again.

It is in this light surely that we must read the words about non-resistance to evil, which strike us still more with the sense of paradox. "But I tell you that you should not offer resistance to injury; if a man strikes you on the one cheek, turn the other cheek also towards him; if he is ready to go to law with you over your coat, let him have your cloak with it; if he compels you to attend him on a mile's journey, go two miles with him of your own accord. . . ." Christ does not here deny the right to self-defense; He acknowledges the right, but He calls on His disciples to renounce this right. It is not a command; like the call to renounce marriage and property it is a "counsel." But it is a "counsel" which is offered to all; it is part of the universal challenge of the Gospel.

This call, therefore, not to resist evil is embedded in the very heart of the Gospel. Like the call to renounce marriage and property, it is part of the challenge of Christianity. This is the conception which we need to recover in our present situation. It is not a question whether it is "legitimate" to fight in a war, but whether the world has not reached a point where we may be called upon to renounce this very "right." At least we have surely reached the point where we must face this question seriously. We can no longer simply accept war as part of a normal life. It has become something so vast, so inhuman and so destructive that it challenges us to ask whether there is not a way out, a way which is indicated by the Gospel itself.

At present it must be admitted that the command "Resist not him that is evil" has become almost a dead letter in the Church. We are sure that it does not take away from us the right to self-defense and from that we go on to accept a whole system of defense by modern weapons of war till the Gospel counsel ceases to have any meaning. In the same way we know that we have the right to marriage and property, and so we put all our energies into building up a world, based on these two institutions, which grows more and more complex every day, until we almost forget the meaning of the words, "Unless a man renounce his father and his mother and wife and children and all that he has, he cannot be My disciple." Thus there is the fearful paradox that Christianity, which is based on poverty and non-violence, has come to be identified in the eyes of so many people with capitalism and war.

How has this come about? In the early Church there is no doubt that the sense of the urgency of the Gospel was overwhelming. The first act recorded of the Church after Pentecost was that "all the faithful held together and shared all that they had, selling their possessions and their means of livelihood, so as to distribute to all as each had need." It is true that we hear no more of this experiment in common living and presumably the need of private ownership soon re-asserted itself, but the gesture is significant. It shows the original impulse of the Church in regard to private property, and it was destined to endure and to take permanent form in the Church in the religious orders, which make the renunciation of private ownership the basis of their way of life.

In the same way we know that in the early Church, that is the Church of the first three centuries, the command not to resist evil was taken very literally. The Christians believed that they belonged to a new age, an age in which non-violence was now the law. So they boasted: "We do not draw the sword against any nation, and we no longer learn to fight, because we have become, thanks to Jesus, sons of peace" (Origen). Military service was not forbidden, but it was not encouraged. It was not considered worthy of a Christian. His duty was not to fight but to pray, and it was thus that he could best serve his country. This was, of course, the attitude of a small community of Christians in the midst of a great empire, in which the regular army could be trusted to defend the country. The Peace of Constantine would change all that, and yet it retains its significance for us still.

BUT THE non-violence of the early Church was carried further than this; it was carried to the point of death. The goal of life in the early Church was found in martyrdom; this was the consummation of the Christian ideal. This is what gives its peculiar character to the early Church. The Christians of those days were not afraid to marry and to possess property and to carry on business of all sorts, but they were made to realize that all these things might be taken away from them at any moment. They lived under the constant threat of martyrdom. And this was recognized not as something to be feared but as something to be desired. It was in this way that the Christian could best follow his Master. It was not by fighting but by suffering and death that he would overcome the world and establish the kingdom of God.

It is impossible to exaggerate the strength of this Gospel of non-violence in the early Church. It was by this that the Roman Empire was overcome. The whole power of Rome was organized to crush this religion; yet it had to admit defeat and Christianity itself became the religion of the Empire. But this very victory brought with it a change. From this time the ideal of non-violence seemed to lose its power in the Church. Gradually the ideal of the "martial" virtues, first of the Romans, then of the Gothic peoples, was substituted, and the ideal of Christian chivalry was formed. There is no doubt that this ideal had its own

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beauty, but it belonged to a very limited period of history and was open to grave abuse. It was not an intrinsically Christian ideal but an attempt to "baptize" pagan virtues. The result has been disastrous; it has simply been the triumph of paganism. The Christian nations have become distinguished above all others for their violence and brutality, and the very ideal of non-violence seems to have faded from men's minds.

There have, of course, been honorable exceptions, like the Quakers, who have preserved the ideal of non-violence down to the present time. But if we would see the force of non-violence in the modern world, we have rather to turn to India and to Mahatma Gandhi. It was he who, partly through the influence of the Gospel and partly through that of ancient Indian thought, recovered the ideal of non-violence for the modern world. This ideal is basic in Indian religion and, one may say, in the Indian character. The Indian has always understood the true strength of character which lies in non-resistance, and it is this which makes an immediate appeal to him in the Gospel. On the other hand, he is all the more shocked to find how little place it has in the life and thought of so many Christians. But it was the genius of Mahatma Gandhi which enabled him to discover in non-violence a means of political and social action, which was found to be no less effective against the British Empire than the early Christian action against the Roman Empire.

MARITAIN, in his *Man and the State*, has written of the importance of Gandhi's example in words which deserve to be quoted. "In my opinion Gandhi's theory and technique could be related to and clarified by the Thomist notion that the principal act of the virtue of fortitude is not attack but endurance; to bear, to suffer with constancy. One has then to recognize that there are two different orders of means of warfare (taken in the widest sense of the word), as there are two kinds of fortitude and courage, the courage that attacks and the courage that endures, the force of coercion or aggression, the force that inflicts suffering on others, and the force that endures suffering inflicted on oneself. There you have two different keyboards that stretch along the two sides of our human nature, opposing evil through attack and coercion, a way which leads at the last extremity if need be to the shedding of the blood of others, and opposing evil through suffering and enduring, a way which in the last extremity leads to the sacrifice of one's own life. To the second keyboard belong the means of spiritual warfare."

This is surely a suggestion of great value to us today. We need to recover this ideal of "spiritual warfare," of a form of non-violent resistance, which is specifically Christian and at the same time is the highest form of courage or fortitude that can be found. It is, certainly, no easy form of virtue. As Gandhi himself always insisted, it demands complete self-conquest before it can become effective. In other words, it is essentially a call to sanctity. It cannot be practiced without training and leadership. Gandhi spent all his life trying to train his people for this, and in the end he had to admit himself defeated. Yet it is something to which many people feel themselves drawn. It seems to be the only way of giving oneself wholeheartedly to a cause without seeing it ruined by the use of unworthy means. Maritain has also spoken of the need of a new type of sanctity today. May it not be that we have here the means of such a new type of sanctity?

It is not, of course, a virtue which can be practiced in isolation. It has to be closely related to the other virtues which constitute the Christian ideal, especially to poverty, chastity and obedience. In fact, it is among the religious orders that one would like to see this ideal take the deepest root, so that it is seen habitually as an essential element in Christian perfection. But it should not be confined to the religious orders. It needs to be embodied in social and political life and become a force of inspiration there. Perhaps Dorothy Day and her companions on the Catholic Worker can give some idea how it can be realized in this way, especially in close association with poverty and the care of the poor.

COMMUNISM, it is generally recognized, cannot be finally overcome by force. Ultimately, it can only be overcome by a spiritual force greater than its own. It has often been said that Mahatma Gandhi was fortunate in having the British to deal with, since they could always be trusted to observe a certain code of honor, however ruthless they might be on occasion. But would his methods have been of any use against Communism? In the same way, the early Christians were able to overcome the Roman Empire, but again the Romans, although they were far more ruthless than the British, had not the Communists' absolute ruthlessness and determination to eliminate all religion. Can a technique of passive resistance be found which can not only endure all that the Communists can inflict but also convert them?

It may be said that Communism represents the spirit of absolute violence. Violence belongs to its very essence; it arises from the nature of its creed. Materialism is of its nature a kind of violence to the spirit of man. It is an attempt to subject everything, and above all the human person, to the law of matter, and the law of matter is the law of violence. It seeks to impose itself on every form of spiritual life; it seeks finally to subject everything to the power of this world.

Non-violence on the other hand, is essentially an

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affirmation of the law of the spirit. Gandhi described it as the "power of truth" and the "power of love." It is the power of truth because it is the recognition of the spiritual ground of all reality and the determined effort to bring everything, that is, all matter, into subjection to this spiritual law. It is the power of love because it is the recognition of the spiritual character in every man and the inviolable respect which this demands.

Gandhi saw clearly that one must be absolutely uncompromising in one's attachment to non-violence. You can counter the absolute spirit of violence in Communism only by a no less absolute spirit of non-violence. Once you allow any compromise to enter in, however legitimate it may be from another point of view, the whole strength of resistance is lost. One must be committed to the principle of non-violence utterly and completely to the point of death. The secret of the power of non-violence was revealed in the death of Christ. There was then revealed a love which was capable of bearing every insult and torture and, finally, death, without the least resistance, and which thereby raised up a new power of life capable of transforming the world. The secret of this power still remains within the Church; it is her secret, her hidden life. It is on our power to learn this secret and to show forth this life that the Church and the world depend.

We Plead Guilty

"We were, frankly, hoping for jail. Perhaps jail, we thought, would put another compulsion on us, of being more truly poor."

by DOROTHY DAY

THE MOST important contribution to thought made by the Catholic Worker, John Cort once said, was our emphasis on voluntary poverty. Whenever I am invited to speak at schools around the country and talk about the problems of destitution in this rich country, and in the name of the Catholic Worker receive praise, I feel guilty. When our readers and listeners say that I make them feel guilty, I can only say I feel more guilty. We live in the midst of destitution in a rich country, and when we sit down to eat, we know that there is a line waiting at the door so long that the house could not hold them. When we pass men lying on the streets at night, and see men huddled around a fire built against the old theater building next door, and we go into our St. Joseph's House of Hospitality, into a house where men are sleeping on the floor (because all the beds are taken) and we go to our own warm and comfortable bed, once again we cannot help but feel guilty.

It is hard to comfort ourselves with the reflection that if we did not get rest and food we would not be able to do the work we do. We can reflect that some of the poverty we profess comes from lack of privacy, lack of time to ourselves. We can list instances of sights and sounds, smells and feelings that one can never get used to nor fail to cringe from. Yet God has blessed us so abundantly, has provided for us so constantly over these twenty-five years that we are always in the paradoxical position of rejoicing and saying to ourselves, "our lines are fallen in goodly places." "It is good, Lord, to be here." We feel overwhelmed with graces, and yet we know we fail to correspond to them. We fail far more than seven times daily, failing in our vocation of poverty especially. As we think of all this, our feeling of guilt persists.

For this reason, as well as for the reason that we are pacifists, we refused to take part in the war maneuvers, if you can call them that, of the compulsory civil defense drills of the past three years. We were, frankly, hoping for jail. Ammon Hennacy, one of our editors, frankly says he wants to be a martyr. And as for me, I feel of course that the servant is not above the master, that we must take up our cross and follow our Master. Perhaps jail, we thought, would put another compulsion on us, of being more truly poor. Then *we* would not be running a house of hospitality, *we* would not be dispensing food and clothing, *we* would not be ministering to the destitute, but would be truly one with them. We would be truly among the least of God's children, sharing with them their misery. Then we could truly say in the prayers at the foot of the altar, "poor banished children of Eve, mourning and weeping in this valley

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of tears." How hard it is to say it, surrounded by material and spiritual benefits as we are!

And so on three occasions we have been imprisoned. Each time we have gone through the gruelling experience of torturous rides in the police van, sitting for long hours in prison cells awaiting booking or trial. In the first year, we had only an overnight experience of jail (which necessitated, however, the examinations for drugs, the humiliations of being stripped and showered and deprived of clothing and belongings). The second year the sentence was five days, and this last summer it was thirty days (with five days off for good behavior).

When we were locked in that first night in a narrow cell meant for one but holding two cots, we had just passed through an experience which was as ugly and horrifying as any I may ever experience. I know that St. Paul said, "Let these things not so much as be mentioned among you," and it is not as a litterateur I speak, but as a Christian, who shares the guilt of all. We had been processed, we clutched our wrappers around us, and as we got off the elevators on the seventh floor to be assigned our cells, we were surrounded by a group of young women, colored and white, Puerto Rican and American, who first surveyed us boldly and then started making ribald comments. Deane Mowrer and I were older women though Deane was younger than I, and Judith Beck was young and beautiful. She was an actress which means that she carries herself consciously, alert to the gaze of others, responding to it. Her black hair hung down around her shoulders, her face was very pale, but she had managed to get some lipstick on before the officers took all her things away from her.

"Put her in my cell," one of the roughest of the Puerto Rican girls shouted, clutching at Judith. "Let me have her," another one called out. It was a real hubbub, ugly and distracting, coming as it did on top of hours of contact with prison officials, officers, nurses and so on.

I had a great sinking of the heart, a great sense of terror for Judith. Was this what jail meant? We had not expected this type of assault—and on the part of women. With the idea of protecting Judith, I *demanded*, and I used that term too for the only time during my imprisonment, that she be put in my cell or Deane's cell if we had to be doubled up because of crowding. "I will make complaints," I said very firmly, "if you do not do this."

The jeering and controversy continued, but the officer took us to our respective cells, putting Judith and me in one, and Deane in another at the opposite corridor. Later, Joan Moses, a young Protestant demonstrator, who had gone alone with her husband to Times Square and made a public refusal to take shelter, and who was tried three days after we were, joined us, and she and Deane, and Judith and I, were put into adjoining cells.

WE FELT this sense of separation from the other prisoners, and as we were locked in that first night, I thought of a recent story by J. D. Salinger which I had read in the *New Yorker*, "Zooie." It is about the impact of the Prayer of Jesus, famous among pilgrims in Russia, on a young girl from an actor's family. The prayer is, "My Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me a sinner." Sometimes the prayer is shortened: "My Lord Jesus, have mercy on me a sinner." Sometimes it is accompanied by prostrations, sometimes by a way of breathing, "my Lord Jesus" being said as one inhales, and the rest of the prayer as one exhales. Eastern theologians warn against using this prayer without spiritual direction. Dr. Bulgakoff states that according to the theology of the Eastern Church, at the very mention of the Holy Name, there He is in the midst of us.

The girl Frannie in Salinger's story has become entangled in this prayer and is in such a state that her mother is about to get the advice of a psychiatrist. But the brother, who has been educated with his sister by an older brother who is something of a mystic, accomplishes her release from the hysteria into which she had plunged through a ceaseless repetition of the Jesus prayer, in a long conversation which makes the story more than a short story. He convinces her finally that she is trying to use a short cut to religious experience, that fundamentally she scorns others and is turning to God to escape from contact with humankind; and he reminds her of a piece of advice given her by an older brother. When she was acting in a radio play, as she had been the summer before, she was to remember the fat lady sitting on her porch rocking and listening to the radio. In other words, "Jesus Christ is the fat lady."

Part of the impact of the story is the contrast between the reverence (the Russians would have rejected "My Jesus, mercy!" as being too intimate) and, not only the last line, the punch line, but the irreverent language which leads up to it, the compulsive use of the Holy Name. The rest of its power lies in the profound Christian truth said over and over again by the saints, after our Lord Himself said it: He has left Himself in the midst of us, and what we can no longer do for Him we can do for them.

We were locked in our cells, and all the other five hundred women in the House of Detention were locked in theirs. The lights would go out at nine-thirty. The noise, the singing, the storytelling, the wildly vile language would go on until then. We were stunned by the impact of our reception, and the wild, manic spirits of all those young women about us. The week's work was finished, it was Friday night, and here were two days of leisure ahead.

I thought of this story of Salinger's and I found it hard to excuse myself for my own immediate harsh reaction. It is all very well to hate the sin and love the

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sinner in theory but it is hard to convey that idea in practice. By my peremptory rejection of the kind of welcome we received, I had of course protected Judith, but there was no expression of loving friendship in it towards the others. Lying there on my hard bed, I mourned to myself, "Jesus is the fat lady. Jesus is this unfortunate girl."

Jackie was released the next day; she had spent her six months, or her year or her two years, or whatever it was. One of the horrors of the House of Detention is that it is not just a place for the women awaiting trial as it was planned to be, but that it is used as a workhouse and penitentiary too, situated unsuitably though it is in the center of the city. A week later, we saw in the *Daily News*, which can be purchased by the inmates, that Jackie had attempted suicide and had been taken to Bellevue psychiatric prison ward. And a week after that she was back in the House of Detention, but on another floor.

THE OTHER prisoners certainly did not harbor any hostility to us nor take offense at the openness of my judgment. It was my interior fear and harshness that I was judging in myself. We had not been issued clothing, and the officers were not going to allow us to go to the chapel in our wrappers. So our kind fellow-prisoners, sensing our keen disappointment, gathered together clothing, underwear, socks and shoes and dresses, so that we could go to Mass and receive Communion. Prostitutes, drug addicts, forgers and thieves had more loving kindness toward us than our jailers, who had no sense of the practice of religion being a necessity to us, but acted as though it were a privilege which they could withhold.

Of all the five hundred women in the Woman's House of Detention only about fifteen got to Mass. By being importunate, I got to see the priest, to ask that my Bible, missal and breviary be permitted me. He was most reserved, withdrawn, and I had the impression that besides being aloof with women in general, he was most especially aloof with women prisoners. The chaplain was a man who might have been able to show a little warmth and human kindness and sympathy, but in addition to the jail, he also tended St. Vincent's Hospital and St. Joseph's Church. So we could not see much of him. On that day we obtained a small pamphlet Mass book and a diocesan paper to read.

Later, on the window sill in the dining room, I came across a copy of an old *New Yorker,* and in it a poem by W. H. Auden. He had come to my rescue the year before when I had been convicted of being a slum landlord. At that time he brought me the money to pay my $250 fine, a sentence which was afterwards suspended. It was like a visit from a friend to find this poem of Auden's. There was a refrain, "Thousands have lived without love, but none without water." This may not be exact—I am quoting from memory—but I know Judith sang it as she rejoiced in the one truly sensual enjoyment of the day, the shower. It was ninety-five degrees outside, and our cell was most oppressive. We indeed felt that we could not live without water.

Within a few days we were able to go to the library which is situated on the second floor of the House of Detention. It is a very good library and one can take out five books a week. Not that there is time to read five books, what with the work schedule each day. I borrowed *Resurrection,* by Tolstoy, that great story of a trek to Siberia of a concourse of prisoners, the royalties from which book were donated by Tolstoy to pay for the emigration of the Doukhobors to Canada to escape the persecution they were undergoing in Russia for their pacifism. I had read the work before and had been especially impressed by the picture of the separation of the political prisoners and the ordinary criminals in the line. There was no such separation in our case.

I read *Northanger Abbey* by Jane Austen and was charmed by her defense of the novel form. I read *Embezzled Heaven* and travelled on pilgrimage with the old servant woman. *Kon Tiki* was a joy indeed and one could feel the spray of the open ocean on one's face and wonder at the great daring of these modern explorers. I was rather afraid to read Mann's *Doctor Faustus,* which my cell mate had taken out of the library—there was already enough emphasis on evil everywhere—but was happy to have my attention called to the beautiful descriptions of music which are in it.

The most startling thing I read in jail was a series of essays, entitled *Lenin,* by Trotsky, published back in 1926 or thereabouts. How had this book found its way into the library of one of our city prisons? But I read it with interest. Trotsky described the moments he spent with Lenin when the revolution had become an accomplished fact, and Kerensky was driven out and Lenin and Trotsky had become the acknowledged leaders. "Lenin made the sign of the cross before his face," Trotsky wrote.

BUT IT was remembering Salinger, and Dostoevsky's Father Zossima, and Alyosha and the Honest Thief, and reading Tolstoy's short stories, that made me feel that again we had failed. We had the luxury of books—our horizons were widened though we were imprisoned. We could not certainly consider ourselves poor. Each day I read the prayers and the lessons from my daily missal and breviary to Judith, and when I told her stories of the fathers of the desert, she told me tales of the Hassidim. On the feast of St. Mary Magdalene I read:

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"On my bed at night I sought him
Whom my heart loves—
I sought him but I did not find him.

I will rise then and go about the city;
in the streets and crossings I will seek
Him whom my heart loves.
I sought him but I did not find him . . .

Oh, that you were my brother,
nursed at my mother's breasts!
If I met you out of doors, I would kiss you
and none would taunt me.
I would lead you, bring you in
to the home of my mother. . . .

Rejoice with me, all you who love the Lord, for
I sought him and he appeared to me. And while I
was weeping at the tomb, I saw my Lord,
Alleluia.

Yes, we fail in love, we make our judgments and we fail to see that we are all brothers, we all are seeking love, seeking God, seeking the beatific vision. All sin is a perversion, a turning from God and a turning to creatures.

If only our love had been stronger and truer, casting out fear, I would not have taken a stand, I would have seen Christ in Jackie. Suppose Judith had been her cell mate for the night and had been able to convey a little of the love the pacifists feel is the force which will overcome war. Perhaps, perhaps. . . . But this is the kind of analyzing and introspection and examination of conscience the narrator in *The Fall* indulged in after he heard that cry in the dark, that splash in the Seine and went his way without having helped his brother, only to hear a mocking laughter that followed him ever after.

Thank God for retroactive prayer! St. Paul said that he did not judge himself, nor must we. We can turn to our Lord Jesus Christ who has repaired already the greatest evil that ever happened or could ever happen, and trust that He will make up for our falls, for our neglects, for our failures in love.

CHRISTMAS IN LITERATURE

Venite, Adoremus

by ANNE FREMANTLE

THE REASON that Christmas is celebrated in literature is, of course, the self-same reason that it is celebrated in life—because the Second Person of the Trinity *"s'est donné la peine de naître,"* gave Himself the trouble to be born, as Beaumarchais has it in "Le Mariage de Figaro." As in life, so also in literature, the Nativity turned the Fall into the *felix culpa,* redeeming all mankind from fate before as well as from sin behind.

In fact, among its other effects, the Nativity brought a new focus into fiction. Previously, between the blows of fortune and the effects of original sin, the ways of men and women appeared so completely determined that—with one or two memorable exceptions such as Antigone and Ulysses—they seemed valid mainly as signs and tokens, as examples of *hubris* and its consequences, or of greed or cowardice or virtue; they rarely stood forth as singular individuals, "of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting" as the Athanasian Creed puts it. The most serious event in human history paradoxically set men and women free to be simple and silly between the pages of books, as in life.

Another of the paradoxes of the Redemption, as St. Augustine noticed, is that nowhere are there greater or more marked differences than among those who are within the unity of the Faith. Not only each nation, but every people and indeed, every tribe, celebrated Christmas quite differently, and has expressed the jubilation it feels in languages and literatures as various as are the natures and attributes of the members of the Mystical Body. Ever since Gregory Thaumaturgus, Bishop of Neocaesarea (died 265) ordained public celebrations of Christmas (other than the customary Church services) to replace the Bacchanalia and Saturnalia, records have been kept of countless festivities marking the "blessed time." The legendary King Arthur kept a "royal Christmas, with mirth and princely cheer" as the chronicler relates, and Charlemagne's Christmas Day coronation in Rome, in A.D.

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800, by Pope Leo III, was the birthday of millennial society that was (or wasn't) holy, or Roman, or Empire, according to the viewpoint of the historian describing it.

The literary response has been at least as varied as the celebrations themselves. There is hardly a writer in any language in all Christendom who hasn't tried his or her hand at some story or play or poem on the subject. Since every writer aspires to the universal, few have ever refused the general invitation to come to the manger.

The first writer who deliberately described Christmas was probably that anonymous monk in the convent of Mimigardo who wrote in 813, in old Saxon, the long alliterative poem, "Heliand." To educate the people Charlemagne had conquered and Christianized, the monk of Mimigardo wrote the story of our Lord's life, in a very gentle poem for such savage times. "Then the mother took Him in her two hands and lovingly laid the dear little one to rest, the child in the manger, the prince of men. Seated before Him was the mother, and the valiant woman herself waited upon and watched the child. In her heart, in the soul of the handmaid, there was no doubt."

Poets from Virgil to Viereck have brought their tributes to Bethlehem; Dante, Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton. Milton the Puritan wrote his splendid "Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity," but by 1652 Christmas was abolished in England, and Parliament composed a "terrible Remonstrance against Masse-mongers and Papists who observed it." However, the seventeenth century galaxy of English Christmas lyrics include Protestants and Recusants alike; Richard Crashaw and Henry Vaughan, Southwell and Herrick vie with one another in worship, in the midst of the Civil War.

Aside from the classic and expected lesser poets, there are many rather unlikely poets—Robert Bridges and Rudyard Kipling, for example, wrote lovely and kindly things (Robert Bridges' last line "Hoping it might be so" is as moving a testimony of doubt as any of the great shouts of unbelief).

Perhaps the most touching account of Christmas, because so early and so alien, is that in the Koran. Following upon the account of the wife of 'Imran who vowed to God "that which is in my belly as a consecrated offering, accept it from me" and was delivered "of a female and Lo! I have named her Mary and Lo! I crave Thy protection for her and for her offspring from Satan the outcast and her Lord accepted her with full acceptance," the Annunciation story is given. To the angelic salutation Mary replies "My Lord! How can I have a child when no mortal hath touched me?" He said, "So (it will be) Allah Createth what He will. He decreeth a thing, He saith unto it only: Be and it is" . . . "And she conceived Him, and withdrew with Him to a far place." Then Jesus is born under a palm tree, "And she brought Him to her own fold, carrying Him. They said: O Mary, thou hast come with an amazing thing. Oh, sister of Aaron, thy father was not a wicked man nor was thy mother a harlot." Then the Baby speaks from the cradle to vindicate His mother, and says: "Lo I am the slave of Allah. He hath given me the Scripture and hath appointed me a Prophet and dutiful toward her who bore me . . . Peace on me the day I was born, and the day I die and the day I shall be raised alive." (Surahs 111, XIX)

The worst, as well as the best, is brought to Bethlehem, for the celebration of Christmas requires the whole writer. Dickens and Thackeray, Washington Irving and Hugh Walpole, have their moments of archness and sentimentality that would make the ox blush. But others have written many good stories for all tastes, from Daudet with his immortal *Three Low Masses* and François Coppée with his sheaf of stones, to our own Dorothy Thompson and Willa Cather. Some of the loveliest German tales have only recently become known here: Stifter's *Rock Crystal,* and Peter Rosegger's tales, Hoffman's and Felix Timmerman's. Both the Scandinavian women giants provide stories worthy of their genius: Sigrid Undset's *Fruit of Sin* and Selma Lagerlof's *The Holy Night.*

OF THE RUSSIANS, Nicolai Gogol's "Christmas Eve," the story of the blacksmith and the devil, and Oksana, Tschub's daughter, the beauty, is a comic delight, though Chekhov's two stories and M. Laskov's "Clothes Mender" have nothing of Christmas about them except the time of year. But the long chapter in *War and Peace* which begins with the insufferable boredom of "after dinner on the third day of Christmas when everyone had settled into his own corner once more and ennui reigned supreme" ends with a wonderfully festive feel. Natasha, who cried out to her mother: "Want! I want him," and is clamoring for Prince Andrei now, right now, teases all the servants and makes a general nuisance of herself, until she and Sonia and Nicolas all go mumming. Then Sonia and Nicolas speak of their love, and everything is changed, for them, and also for Natasha, as they drive home through the moonlit crisp snow.

Italian, Spanish and Portuguese Christmases there are aplenty, but of the folklorish rather than the literary type. The Americans come out admirably—from the early *St. Nicholas Magazine* days on there has been a succession of grand Christmas stories—especially Westerns. Bret Harte's "How Christmas Came" to the lonely child who didn't know who Santa Claus was is well matched in our own day by Paul Horgan's lovely saint's Christmas tale. O. Henry's

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"The Gift of the Magi" and Henry van Dyke's "The Other Wise Man," are authentic classics, and Owen Wister and Frank Norris have a good tale apiece. In England the *Times'* annual Christmas stories have been very uneven, but Thomas Hardy's "The Thieves Who Couldn't Stop Sneezing" and Walter de la Mare's "The Almond Tree" are two stories that are literature as well as seasonal reading.

A little-known description of one Christmas, pathetic but yet delightful, is that of 1857 as told by Edmund Gosse in his immortal autobiography, *Father and Son.* Edmund's mother died—the child was seven—"my father had given the strictest injunction that the Christmas dinner be neither more nor less copious than usual." He was obeyed, but the servants, secretly rebellious, made a small plum pudding for themselves. "Early in the afternoon the maids, of whom we were now advanced to keeping two, kindly remarked that 'the poor dear child ought to have a bit anyhow' and wheeled me into the kitchen where I ate a slice of plum pudding. Shortly after I began to feel pain inside which in my frail state was inevitable, and my conscience smote me violently. At last I could bear my spiritual anguish no longer and bursting into the study I called out 'O papa, I have eaten of flesh offered to idols.' It took some time between my sobs for my father to ascertain what had occurred. 'Where is the accursed thing?' he exclaimed." Mr. Gosse Senior was passionately Low-Church, and he ran into the midst of the servants and seized what was left of the pudding. Plate in one hand, young Edmund in the other, he ran out and flung the "idolatrous confection" on the garbage heap.

Other strange Christmases are the tremendous one in *All Quiet on the Western Front,* where Erich Maria Remarque describes the day the guns halted. And Rockwell Kent's *A Northern Christmas*, with his paintings of Renard Island, recalls St. Jean Brébeuf's *Jesous ahatoubia,* the carol he wrote in Huron in the year 1641.

It is a splendid procession, of stories and verses of all the centuries and from all the Christian nations. The Victorians did very well: Christina Rosetti, William Wordsworth, Alfred Tennyson, and William Morris with his Outlanders shouting: "News, news of of the Trinity." Elizabeth Barrett Browning with her echoes of Dante in Mary's words: "My flesh, my Lord." But our contemporaries have done much better: T. S. Eliot's *Journey of the Magi,* with its supremely understated last line, and his recent *Cultivation of Christmas Trees*, Rainer Maria Rilke's touching Mary poems, C. Day Lewis and Allen Tate, Thomas Merton, W. H. Auden and Robert Lowell with his Boston remembrances. But at the manger there can be no competition, only company, and such good company: the communion of sinners singing with all the saints.

THE SCREEN

IT'S SO PEACEFUL IN THE COUNTRY

CONSIDERING the sex-obsessed story they had to start with, the makers of "Peyton Place" have turned out a surprisingly good movie. To John Michael Hayes fell the difficult task of fashioning a script from Grace Metalious' long and crowded novel. He did his job well, making changes, of course, and giving meaning to loose themes. And Jerry Wald spared no expense in a production that has a large and good cast and quite handsome photography of Camden, Maine, which serves well as the town of Peyton Place.

Perhaps the story is still too crowded; and certainly no town since Spoon River has had so many people beset with so many problems. It all starts, after the town is described effectively by camera and sound track, with the arrival of the new high school principal (Lee Philips), whose appointment is disappointing to the teacher (Mildred Dunnock) who hoped for the job; but in the long run his high standards turn out to be good for the town. And during the course of this long picture, we do get a long run: meeting the many characters and discovering their equally plentiful conflicts.

Director Mark Robson, who also had no easy time in this complicated film, has handled his people and interwoven plot with skill. Three families become the main interest: the MacKenzies, with Lana Turner as the mother, who, because of her early experiences, thinks everything in connection with sex is "dirty," and Diane Varsi, as her daughter who goes through a painful experience when she learns her mother and father were not married; the Crosses, with Betty Field as the mother who works for the MacKenzies, Arthur Kennedy somewhat miscast as her second husband who attacks his stepdaughter, Hope Lange as the daughter who survives this horrible experience and then even worse ones; the Harringtons, with Leon Ames as the class-conscious factory-owner, Barry Coe as his son who falls in love with a flashy girl from the wrong side of the tracks, and Terry Moore as this girl who drops her flashiness and settles down after marriage. Needless to say, "Peyton Place" has its melodramatic moments; but it also has some thoughtful and sensitive scenes: Lee Philips convincing loveless Lana Turner that there's more to love than sex; Diane Varsi and Russ Tamblyn (who gives an excellent performance as a mother-dominated boy) discussing the facts of life gropingly and without the guidance of a much-needed mentor; Lloyd Nolan as the doctor effectively summing up the picture and telling off the townsfolk for their indifference to their neighbors' troubles: "We are all prisoners of each other's gossip."

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CARL DREYER, the famous Danish film maker who is known in this country mainly for two movies, the silent and memorable "Passion of Joan of Arc" and the later "Day of Wrath" (about witchcraft), also has a great deal to say about intolerance in his latest film, "Ordet" ("The Word"). He is concerned with the prejudices of Protestant sects and their un-Christian quarreling with each other. He concentrates on one family whose religion has more warmth and happiness than that of most of the neighbors in this farming and seafaring community; but it is an odd family indeed, consisting of a patriarchal father and three sons: the eldest, a kindly and honest man, now a non-believer, with a very attractive wife and two little daughters; the second son, a mental case who had a nervous breadown while studying for the ministry and now believes he is Christ; and the youngest son, a likable fellow who wants to marry a girl whose family belongs to a gloomy and forbidding sect.

Dreyer, who directed his first-rate Danish cast superbly, also wrote the script for "Ordet," basing it on the 1932 play by Kaj Munk. The movie, beautifully photographed in black-and-white and often giving a gray effect that is particularly suitable to its subject matter, has a hypnotically poetic quality. The film is very long (126 minutes) and the constant bickering about minute religious matters may begin to pall, but not to the point of destroying interest. One is impelled to stay to see what will happen, to learn particularly what the middle son, who says, "I am the Light of the world," will do. Dreyer has directed this role, played by Preben Lerdorff Rye, so well that there is never a touch of sacrilege about it, in spite of the mental aberration; and when the elder son's wife dies in childbirth and a miracle takes place in the closing scenes, it is filmed with great sincerity and faith.

WALT DISNEY turns to rural areas for themes in his new picture too. "Old Yeller" is about a family in Texas after the Civil War when farm life was by no means easy. When the father (Fess Parker) starts out on a three-month cattle drive, he leaves his teen-age son (Tommy Kirk) in charge of the mother (Dorothy McGuire), his six-year-old brother (Kevin Corcoran) and the farm. Tommy is naturally cautious and is none too happy when little Kevin adopts the stray mongrel they name Old Yeller, but the dog proves his worth again and again. This is probably the best live-action fiction film Disney has made. With Robert Stevenson's good direction, some lovely Technicolor photography, the warm and exciting script that Fred Gipson wrote from his own novel, and a responsive cast all contributing to the pleasures, "Old Yeller" is the kind of movie that grown-ups will enjoy taking youngsters to. Its appeal is universal.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

THE STAGE

AN EXERCISE IN GENRE

UNDER Mr. Tyrone Guthrie's tutelage, the Phoenix Theatre continues its assumption of the exotic. Neither "The Makropoulos Secret" nor its author, Karel Capek, command quite the animation and fundamental power of Schiller's "Mary Stuart": the mild audacity of the Czech playwright seems dusty with time, and the dramatic impulse behind "The Makropoulos Secret" could never have been deeply insistent. Yet paradoxes intrude, and one is forced to admit in justice that if the play's intellectual bite is meager, its imaginative force seems nonetheless considerable; if its dramatic vitality is low, it is full still of the interests of theater, and achieves a kind of excellence within self-imposed limits. It gives pleasure, too, as a cultural document, returning us to that fantasy world of *mittel-Europa,* and the spiritual crisis of monocled aristocrats—slimy with class hauteur—and opera singers, legendary images of glamor, exhausted by gusty accesses of passion.

Capek's authority with this stuff of imagination is easy—too easy—and he manipulates it with a gaudy expertise, not too fastidious. Yet his concerns lie obviously elsewhere: ultimately, he employs the motif of bodily longevity as a means to comment on a state of threatened and (he would have it) ideal spirit. It is a usage comparable to Shaw's in "Back to Methuselah," yet the two plays differ in more than their alien commitments; they share no comparable quality of mind or embodied expressiveness, and one is finally reluctant to admit the claims of "The Makropoulos Secret" as *rigorous* commentary on a philosophic theme. Still, inadequacy need not necessarily exclude worthiness, nor naiveté responsibility, and Capek is in secure possession of these virtues. He makes his plea for unconditioned spirit with eloquent humanism and even a discreet passion; there is, too, an open dignity—a generous response—in his consciousness of the vital possibility of life, and this is a dignity of feeling to which subsequent European dramatists have not often risen.

It is curious to speculate on the attractions such a piece may have had for Mr. Guthrie. "The Makropoulos Secret" permits no scope for his (often rather ghastly) Bright Ideas; it contains no histrionic forces to be deployed, no rhetorical clamors. Indeed, I would suspect Mr. Guthrie turned to it as an exercise in genre, quite as he sought, in his wholly admirable staging of "The Matchmaker," to rehabilitate the emptied structure of nineteenth-century farce. "The Makropoulos Secret" is accessible to a similar restatement; it seems the lineal descendant of what one may imagine

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the theater of Scribe and Sardou to have been like: "serious" in its assumptions, but intermittently convulsed by wild gleams of the preposterous. Mr. Guthrie cannot extinguish these giddy spasms, so he subdues them, guiding the play artfully, in its third act, into a poised climate of emotional eloquence, spiritual authority and melodramatic dash. (He is assisted here by Mr. Norris Houghton's superb last decor, a formal setting of extraordinary aptness and stylistic unity.) Indeed, the success of this production, though not an achievement on any major scale, is yet a thing of distinction, and much to be commended; nor do I imply satiric comment when I suggest that the very absence, from "The Makropoulos Secret," of anything finely poetic or imaginative, may be an index to Mr. Guthrie's accomplishment with it.

Miss Eileen Herlie carries the ambiguous central role with splendid amplitude of effect, with elegance and a relief of wit. This last is the saving grace, that stone upon which rests Miss Herlie's subtle triumph, and a function of her complex intelligence. She knows that this role she must create—this dilating vessel of glamor, removed by fate and choice from mortal experience—is an image designed for another architecture of theater, calling not so much on forgotten crafts, but on a different sensibility, on a discarded willingness to suspend disbelief. She knows that such an image may be infused with life only by wit—by keeping it steadily at a distance, making on its grand assumption always some ironic commentary of fresh experience. The unfailing precision with which Miss Herlie keeps this quality in fluent solution is a source of baffling pleasure. She does not guy the role (I am anxious to be understood on this point); rather she brings to bear on its tragic postures some fleck and light of daylight mind, a droll audacity. I have known actors of a Latin sensibility to manage this dual tone with ease; it is usually alien, however, to the Anglo-Saxon temperament, which demands that a moment be of one texture or another, and none of your bloody mixtures. It is not always a welcome tone—in the chemically pure atmosphere of high tragedy, where belief is absolute, it would be ruinous—but in this shifting world, ever so slightly bogus, its delicate use suggests a perception of brilliance. Miss Herlie plays the role not for some realism of passion, but with awareness of its abstraction and ideality, its primacy as comment, not embodied experience. Yet all of her grace is liquid and imposing, all of her knowingness fatal; and her curtain call—sinuous, plangent, innocuously malign, glowing with some phosphorescent allure of exhausted passion and spirit—this is one of the great witty *frissons* of the season. *(At the Phoenix.)*

RICHARD HAYES.

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SEASON'S GREETINGS

MERRY CHRISTMAS to all! And I am going to take a columnist's privilege; I am going to pass out some special greetings.

First of all, to Ed Skillin, the unassuming editor of this magazine for the past twenty years. Without him there would have been no Commonweal. For that reason alone, if I were president of all the Catholic colleges in the United States I would shower him with honorary degrees. If I were the Civil Liberties Union I would pin a dozen medals on his breast. He really believes in freedom of expression, as anyone who has worked with him will agree; what is more he acts on his belief.

To John Brubaker, The Commonweal's advertising manager. He has the kind of experience, knowledge and competence that could readily be turned into rich reward. But for years he has passed up one opportunity after another in order to do his part in keeping The Commonweal afloat.

To everyone else associated with the magazine—editors Jim O'Gara, Jim Finn and Dick Horchler, who say what must be said and often add what no one else would dare say; Philip Hartung and Richard Hayes, who carry on a distinguished tradition of Commonweal criticism; Anne Fremantle and John Cort, who are themselves a tradition.

And Merry Christmas too to all contributors, reviewers, readers and special friends who from time to time come across so the magazine can come out.

To the young men who are helping to change the face of the Catholic press. Offhand I can think of Donald McDonald (Davenport *Catholic Messenger*); Dennis Howard *(The Sign);* Father Ready and Don Thorman *(Ave Maria)*; Father Bosler *(Indiana Catholic);* Monsignor Lally *(Boston Pilot);* Ed Rice and Company *(Jubilee);* Jim Burns *(Today)*. There are many, many others. Merry Christmas to all of them—and a special bow to Dean O'Sullivan, Dave Host and the Marquette School of Journalism.

To the priests, religious and laity who have made Chicago famous as a Catholic center. There are too many to name, but Msgr. Dan Cantwell, Msgr. Reynold Hillenbrand and Father Martin Carrabine, S. J. (now stationed in Cleveland) would surely rank high on any list.

To Jacques and Raissa Maritain. Every day there is more reason to be grateful that they have chosen America as their adopted land.

To C. G. Paulding. For years he wrote the best column ever to appear in The Commonweal and I remember it gratefully.

To Father H. A. Reinhold. He never wrote a dull article in his life and gave us all a richer understanding of the Church.

To all the paper-back publishers who have brought reading back into fashion—and a particularly low bow to those who have catered to the high brow.

To the editorial staff of *America.* The new *new* America is on the way toward being as good as the old *America* was.

To Bette Richart. She would stand out as a fine sensitive critic anywhere. The Commonweal is lucky to have her.

To Frank O'Malley at Notre Dame. He is already a legend who must be counted among the Great Teachers in America.

To Theodore Gill at the *Christian Century*. He writes the way we all wish we could.

To J. F. Powers. No one can rush him into publishing anything until he is sure it is just right.

To Father George Barry Ford. High Mass at his Corpus Christi parish in Manhattan is a memorable experience.

To Eugene McCarthy. He has shown people what an Irish Catholic politician should be.

To all the Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa, Wisconsin. They gave us the incomparable Sister Thomas Aquinas, who died last summer.

To Robert Hutchins and all my colleagues at the Fund for the Republic.

To the nine high-school kids who dared to go to class in Little Rock.

To the man (or woman) who first thought of canning ready-made shaving lather.

To John Foster Dulles. He has troubles.

To Dean Acheson. He used to have them.

To Frank O'Connor, Frank Sinatra and any other Frank who does what he does better than anybody else.

To the Reverend Arthur J. Brown, with whom I serve on the board of the Church Peace Union. He is 101 years old and makes me feel 102.

To everyone with children. I have a houseful myself and I know what you are going through.

To Jean Kerr who forgot to tell the young Kerrs not to eat the daisies.

To Dorothy Day, for many reasons; to Congressman Walter, for getting off my back; to all missionaries the world over; to the authors of all the books I liked this year; to those who wrote the new songs I liked; to the people who made the good television programs possible; to all the columnists (even David Lawrence) I read every day; and, especially, to everyone in Brooklyn because only this year did I learn what a wonderful place it is.

JOHN COGLEY.

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Ballads of St. John of the Cross

(Versions by John Frederick Nims)

OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

In the beginning, the Word
lived in the being of God,
happy as happy could be—
therein its happiness had!

Seeing it was God, the Word
(as the beginning we call)
in the beginning it lived,
had no beginning at all.

For the beginning it was;
hence what it was, had not.
Son is the word for the Word
of the beginning begot.

The father, time out of mind
begetting, begets him today:
all he possesses, confers;
giving, gives nothing away.

Lo, how the soul of the son
shows in the father alone!
So in the son is the sire's
glory full worthily shown.

As in the lover the loved,
one in the other is so.
This love interfusing the two
may in equality go

both with the one as the one—
level in pitch and degree.
Three are the persons, their love
wonderful one-among-three.

Only one love among three!
Only one love bearing three!
There where the loved is the lover,
life-giving life to the three!

Reckon the range of their power—
each has it all, and alone.
Each is in love with his fellow-
peers of the luminous zone.

Each is the uttermost all,
each and alone is the tie
of the inscrutable union
staggering *wherefore* and *why*.

Infinite withy and link
is the love celebrated above:
love, sole and yet triple
(such is the marrow thereof);
love, the more single and only,
generates all the more love!

OF THE ANNUNCIATION

It was an angel he beckoned;
it was Gabriel came;
he waved him away on an errand:
it was Mary her name.

She must say the right word, this maiden,
for the wonder of wonders to be:
for the Word to be sleeved and gaitered
in flesh by the mighty three.

Three had a hand in the work,
but it worked an effect on one.
Who but the Word made flesh?
Where but in Mary's womb?

The son had a father before;
first had a mother then.
Mother yes, but no mother
conceiving as mothers of men.

He had his flesh of her flesh:
so a new life began.
Now the son of the highest
answers to son of man.

OF THE NATIVITY

In time it came round, the time
ripe for the birth of a boy.
Much as a bridegroom steps
fresh from the chamber of joy,

arm in arm he arrived
entwining the sweetheart he chose.
Both in a byre at hand
the pleasant mother reposed

among oxen and burros and such
as the winter sky drove in.
How they struck up a tune, those folk!
Sweeter the angels sang!

There was a bridal to chant!
There was a pair well wed!
But why did he sob and sob,
God in his rough-hewn bed?

Such a dazzle of tears!—this gift
all that the bride could bring?
How the mother was struck at so
topsy-turvy a thing:

distress of the flesh, in God!
In man, the pitch of delight!
Pairs never coupled so;
different as day and night.

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A Man Whom Nobody Blamed

ROOM AT THE TOP. By John Braine. Houghton Mifflin. $3.75.

By PHILIP DEASY

ON the blurb of this first novel by the latest of England's angry young men, the reader is remined that within he will hear the "hunger of youth really snarling" and furthermore that "it's a good sound to hear again." "Snarling" is hardly the right word. Whining or moaning or purring, perhaps, but not snarling. Nor, whatever it is, is it a good sound to hear. It's too bad, too profoundly bad. Better the kind of quietist youth we're now told we're having in America than the kind of hungry youth portrayed in *Room at the Top*.

This is the story of Joe Lampton, a prematurely paunchy thirty-five when the novel opens, and of how he rose from lowly clerk to the heady eminence of Successful Zombiehood. (A Zombie, in contemporary American usage, is evidently a Square cubed, a Queak, that is, the lowest form of Philistine. A Successful Zombie is the modern high priest of the bitch goddess) Joe himself narrates his tale, a long flashback review, broken up intermittently by some sentimental self-analysis, of the ten years since he left his childhood town of Dufton and came to the more prosperous and promising town of Warley. Joe is a war orphan (his parents were killed in a single air raid inflicted on Dufton) and a war veteran of the R.A.F. His first job in Warley is as an accountant in the town Treasurer's office; he reaches the top as the pure Organization Man when his rich father-in-law sets him up as an executive.

On his way up Joe has two major love affairs, one with Alice Aisgill, a married woman nine years his senior, the other with Susan Brown, a kittenish nineteen, the only daughter of a rich factory-owner. There are several minor skirmishes with others, whom Joe in one of his characteristic adjectives of appraisal refers to as bedworthy women, but these are passing and diversionary. Alice, by far the most appealing character of the novel, commits suicide when Joe breaks off their relationship to marry Susan. Susan's fate, that of death-in-life as Joe's wife, is worse. She is pregnant before marriage, a condition known to her father, who thereupon "persuades" Joe of his honorable duty.

By way of soft impeaching understatement it must be said that Joe is hardly the stuff of which heroes are made. He is almost totally devoid of growth potential. He has no inner life, no spiritual stature whatsoever. The nearest to what might have been an esthetic influence in his life is his membership in The Thespians, the Warley drama group, but even that is used chiefly as a proximate occasion for meeting girls and gossiping about homosexuality. He is cheap and childish, his dominant motive always that of calculated self-interest. He is the perfect antithesis of the committed, the engaged, the Outsider. In one of his outbursts of self-analysis he flatters himself: "What has happened to me is exactly what I willed to happen. I am my own draughtsman. Destiny, force of events, fate, good or bad fortune—all that battered repertory company can be thrown out of my story, left to starve without a moment's recognition." The sad truth is that, to paraphrase Peter de Vries, Joe has no will, only a will of his own. He much more truly approaches insight into his condition when he recognizes, "I suppose that I had my chance to become a real person," and when after he is told that nobody blames him for Alice's death, he cries out, "Oh my God, that's the trouble," the utterance with which the novel ends.

It is those moments of honesty that partially redeem Joe and save him from coming through as wholly despicable. Add to that the latent decency apparent in the genuinely agonizing experience he suffers after learning of Alice's suicide, the most vivid and intensely moving pages of the novel, and the real achievement of Mr. Braine's portrayal of a quasi-heel is evident. This is not, however, to remove all doubt as to whether Joe has enough weight and complexity to carry a novel told from the chief participant point of view. Perhaps his ultimate value will be as another sociological case history of postwar welfare statism.

At any rate, *Room at the Top* is no first novel to be dismissed patronizingly by saying that it shows promise. Mr. Braine definitely has it; his creative equipment is impressive. What he needs now is something to write about commensurate with his gifts.

Traditional Hero Restored

PEMBERTON, LTD. By Anthony Glyn. Dial. $3.95.

By ALICE ELLEN MAYHEW

A YOUNG, literate Englishman's struggle to find himself is played out against the familiar themes of restless colonial life under the pressure of modern nationalism, a duel between junior executive and chairman of the board, and the individual versus the organization man.

Mr. Glyn doesn't have anything new to add to the factual content of the mounting literature on these subjects, and his vantage points are the familiar and stock ones. But he does have a point of view that is hearteningly optimistic and a more gentle sign of the times than those to which we have become accustomed, if not inured. This is not to say merely that the hero triumphs, which he does—handily—but that Mr. Glyn uses the backdrop of these popular predicaments to dramatize a more universal theme. Here is not the usual young

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rebel scowling abortively at a world he never made, but a man made by the "old" England and hopefully involved in the perennial searches: love, integrity, destiny.

Hugo Pemberton is pressured into renouncing his hopes for a literary career and entering his family's sugar cane business by growing financial responsibility in the form of a beautiful young wife and a set of twins. Promised a secure job in London after an eighteen-month tour of duty in the West Indies, he is frustrated by a faintly sadistic cousin, who means to keep him permanently out of the way in the colonies. Unable to find complete love and happiness with his sophisticated and ambitious wife, Pemberton falls briefly, and inevitably, into the hands of a submissive Chinese girl. His literary ambitions seem forever out of reach, and his failing fortunes compel him to return to the job he hates. Yet, over these considerable obstacles, Hugo ultimately wins all of his heart's desires. He is so completely the antithesis of the helplessly angry young man, so neatly a winner, that he too often eludes our involvement. When the chips are down, Hugo simply can do no wrong.

But if the situations are simple and cliché and the characters familiar, Mr. Glyn's treatment of them is interesting. There is an underline of paradox in the characterizations that is slowly and climactically revealed by means of a subtle irony. For nothing is as it seems. The overfastidious chairman, who has such easy power over the lives of men, has a library filled with pornographic books, is weak and easily beaten. The gentle Chinese girl's humility is replaced by arrogance when she discovers her power over Hugo. Hugo's cool and elegant wife reveals a depth of loyalty, intelligence and tenderness that prove her love well won. The ineffectual country squire on the board of directors shows the spirit that finally saves the day.

Perhaps the loose ends are too neatly braided to offer much suspense. Nevertheless, it is a pleasure to be reminded that the verb *seek* contains the implication *find*. "I don't think one should fight one's personal destiny," one of the characters remarks. But, in his first novel, Mr. Glyn adds his testimony to those who have held, throughout the ages, that heroes do fight.

Authentic German Appraisal

ADENAUER AND THE NEW GERMANY. By Edgar Alexander. Farrar, Strauss. $5.25.

By VICTOR C. FERKISS

ONE OF THE besetting intellectual sins of Americans is their inability to view the social and political problems of other nations in other than American terms, a failing to which both conservatives and liberals are equally prone. In recent years the ideological demands of the Cold War have compounded our ignorance by adding new clichés to confuse our thinking. As a result, most Americans view the outside world as populated mainly by "Communists," "liberals," "freedom fighters," "reactionaries" and other assorted chimeras. Accordingly, many American readers of the mass media look upon Konrad Adenauer as the symbol of renascent German democracy, a man who can do little wrong, while for others he is the incarnation of reactionary clericalism, and hope for Germany lies somehow in the future of the intellectually sterile bureaucracy of the Social Democratic party.

It is the chief merit of Edgar Alexander's book that it presents an appraisal of Adenauer and his regime that is authentically German, even to its verbosity of style and fondness for high sounding terms of dubious descriptive value. While his volume is uniformly adulatory toward Adenauer and includes an epilogue by the Chancellor himself, it is singularly useful in that it praises Adenauer for exhibiting European virtues in a European context.

Dr. Alexander, a German Catholic intellectual of anti-Nazi background, looks upon Adenauer as a true representative and embodiment of a German philosophy both essentially Christian and yet firmly liberal, in the tradition of Lord Acton and Tocqueville. Many Americans will be surprised to learn of Adenauer's early conflicts with political clericalism in German Catholic circles, and of his related struggle against the romantic philosophies which almost overwhelmed the authentic scholastic tradition in German Catholic thought and paved the way of proto-Nazi political orientations on the part of many German conservatives, Catholic and otherwise. But, as Alexander indicates, while Adenauer has always been staunchly anti-Nazi, he is not a positivist "majoritarian" liberal but a leader whose authoritarianism (Alexander prefers to call it paternalism) has roots deep in both Christian concepts and the psychological needs of the post-war Germany.

While the reader will probably come away from Alexander's encomium with a willingness to accept the author's insightful portrait of Adenauer the man and statesman, one's credulity is strained by the contention that the Christian Democratic Union actually reflects Adenauer's spiritual orientation. Alex-

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ander tends to attribute more power to ideas as a force in history, especially German history, than the facts warrant; he therefore glosses over the superficiality of recent German politics, which actually have reflected an era in which Germans have been so interested in economic recovery that they have been ready to accept any regime which could restore German sovereignty and preserve internal peace. The romantic extremes of Nazism and Communism seem to have been at least temporarily eliminated from a Germany with a developing two-party system, and though the two rival parties make much of their fundamental ideological cleavages (seemingly a bad portent for the survival of parliamentary democracy) the average German appears to be little moved by their appeals. Both the C.D.U. and the S.P.D. are really empty shells, with lagging memberships and little appeal to youth, kept alive by aging pre-Nazi politicians and the tolerance of an apathetic public.

Dr. Alexander's estimate of Adenauer's achievements on the international scene is unduly generous. It is true that Adenauer's deep personal commitment to European unity was largely responsible for the Franco-German rapprochement, but it must be remembered that a good deal of his success was due to the fact that the points at issue had become virtually meaningless in a nuclear age.

Hindsight would now seem to suggest that the Chancellor's devotion to NATO is more of a tribute to his heart than to his political head. Finally, the burning question of German unity remains unsolved and insoluble, short of a radical change in the world political picture, something neither Adenauer nor his captious critics is in a position to bring about.

The author's faith in the future of Adenauer's "New Germany" is, even at the level of domestic politics, based less on marshalled evidence than on hope. The "problem of the generations" remains, and one is left with the fear that, like his predecessor Bismarck, Adenauer has been successful not so much by means of truly creative statecraft but rather through the creation of another "genius-system," workable only by the master and incapable of surviving his passing. In the last analysis Konrad Adenauer may be less the builder of a new Germany than the belated flowering of the best in the old.

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Exotic Yet Familiar Novel

THE MAKIOKA SISTERS. By Junichiro Tanizaki. Knopf. $4.95.

By ELIZABETH BARTELME

THIS BIG, slow-moving novel, which has been described as the major work of Japan's greatest living novelist, will not, despite its exotic setting, seem strange or unfamiliar to Western readers. Its theme—the gradual and inevitable decline of a family once socially and economically prominent—is by no means unusual, yet Tanizaki's treatment invests it with a special poignancy, for his novel deals not only with the end of tradition in the Makioka family but with the disappearance of a way of life in Japan.

The four Makioka sisters belong to one of the great merchant families of Osaka. Seemingly secure in their social position, they see the status quo as being as unshakable as the universe, and they carefully close their eyes to the little ripples of change that begin to make themselves felt. But they are forced into an awareness of certain changes when their attempts to secure a suitable husband for third sister Yakiko meet with constant failure. That new ways are upon them strikes them forcibly and cruelly when Taeko, the youngest, rejects the ancient ways altogether and brings disgrace upon herself and upon her family.

The sisters, although differing temperamentally, are closely bound together by ties of affection and loyalty. Tsuruko, the eldest, represents family authority and, in her ponderous, slow-witted way, struggles against the encroachments of genteel poverty and new customs. Sachiko, married to the intelligent and understanding Teinosuke, depends on his support for her warm-hearted championship of the younger sisters against the "main house," and unwittingly sets in motion the forces that undermine their traditional values.

The two unmarried sisters are regarded by the rest of the family as "problem children": Yakiko because her passive resistance to choosing a husband has resulted in a dearth of offers; Taeko because she has determined to forge a life of her own regardless of family opposition. In these two younger women the old and new Japan is symbolized. Yakiko, intensely shy and retiring, delicate and accomplished, is a figure of the ancient Japanese lady. Taeko, going her own way in casual, bohemian fashion, represents the impact of

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modern—and Western—life upon Japan.

It is evident that Tanizaki understands and has experienced the conflict between these ways of life. Written after the war, the novel has a nostalgic quality—a hungering for the beauty, order and harmony of the old ways. Yet Tanizaki is too naturalistic a novelist to present an idealized conception of even the most tranquil aspect of the sisters' lives. The petty irritations of everyday life are presented as carefully as is the carefree gaiety of Sachiko's household. Small illnesses plague them in the midst of pleasure, vitamin-B injections are the order of the day, and no stone is left unturned to uncover a further point of interest in the medical history of each sister.

If this medical detail stands out rather unpleasantly, it is only because it is part of Tanizaki's technique in exploring his characters and situations. No matter what he is describing, detail is piled upon detail until the intimate knowledge of the Makiokas' clothes, makeup, furniture, amusements, the streets, shops and teahouses of Osaka is overwhelming. Yet this massing of apparently unimportant detail never obliterates what Tanizaki is attempting to describe, but rounds and completes it. It is particularly effective in scenes such as the flood in which Taeko almost loses her life, or in the description of a butterfly hunt where the writer's poetic quality is especially compelling.

Although not in itself a flaw in the novel, one misses a quality of greatness in the Makioka sisters. There are flashes of it in the other characters, in Itakura, for instance, the lower-class photographer who risks his life in the flood to save Taeko; in Teinosuke who humbles himself more than once to plead Yakiko's cause with a reluctant suitor. But the sisters, particularly the older two, are too obsessed with pride to rise to self-sacrifice, and it is therein that their tragedy as human beings lies. Here what Tanizaki has done is to explore the nature of and destructiveness of pride, which dominates the figures in his landscape as they stand in full relief on the massive canvas of their author's imagination.

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